

The New York Times' Alexis Grenell denounces white women for upholding the "patriarchy"

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12 October 2018

In the wake of Brett Kavanaugh's confirmation to the US Supreme Court, the *New York Times* published an opinion piece by Alexis Grenell headlined "White women, come get your people."

Grenell's article is a politically unhinged rant that accuses female Republican senators and other women who didn't support the anti-Kavanaugh movement of betraying their sex, accuses "white women" in general of benefiting from "patriarchy" and of participating in a "blood pact" with "privileged" white men, and pours scorn on presumption of innocence and other elementary democratic rights. Her piece is an extreme example of the obsession with gender and race that has infected the upper middle class and the pages of the *New York Times*.

Grenell is a journalist, a Democratic Party supporter and as a co-founder of Pythia Public Affairs, a public relations firm in New York, a consultant to politicians and corporations. That is, she is a political propagandist by trade and writes like one.

Grenell begins by asserting that the ultra-right Kavanaugh was approved by the Senate after "a confirmation process where women all but slit their wrists, letting their stories of sexual trauma run like rivers of blood through the Capitol." The feverish tone is intended to conceal the fact that the charges against Kavanaugh remain uncorroborated and unproven, and that the whole process was designed to avoid any reference to Kavanaugh's record of support for war, torture and repression.

Grenell then decries the female Republican senators who voted for Donald Trump's nominee as "gender traitors," who she claims have "made standing by the patriarchy a full-time job."

According to the *Times* columnist, the confirmation of Kavanaugh and Trump's election are both consequences of the "patriarchy" being upheld by white women who are supposedly comfortable with the system because they can leverage their "whiteness" for special privileges.

The US is not a patriarchy, defined as a system of government in which men hold power and women are excluded from political life. A more correct example of a patriarchal society might be Saudi Arabia, a loyal ally of Washington, where male guardianship laws exist and (some) women just won the right to drive cars.

In the US, women have the same political rights as men. They can hold office, run companies, make fortunes and direct wars. In fact, four of the top five US defense businesses that build the weapons used by American imperialism to murder innocent people, including women and children all around the globe, are run by multimillionaire women.

Hillary Clinton, as a female secretary of state under the first black president, Barack Obama, presided over the arming of Islamist groups in Libya, the gruesome assassination of the country's president and generally played a leading role in fomenting a war of aggression in Libya that killed tens of thousands of people, including countless innocent women and children. She organized these imperialist atrocities as shamelessly and enthusiastically as any of her male colleagues.

For women in power, no less than men, it is class interests that dictate actions, contrary to Grenell's theory of the "solidarity" of the "uterus." In politics, terms such as "women," "white people," "black people" are classless abstractions that deliberately conceal the actual state of social and economic affairs.

Grenell's piece tries to obscure social divisions by insisting that white women "hold an elevated position over women of color" by "trading on their whiteness to monopolize resources."

In fact, the defining feature of life in the US is economic and social inequality. This class divide cuts across all other "identities," whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation or nationality. The day-to-day experience of a working-class woman, of any race or nationality, is worlds away from that

of elite women such as Clinton, Kellyanne Conway or Michelle Obama. Or Alexis Grenell, for that matter.

Grenell, as noted above, is a Democrat, a highly paid consultant and a journalist—and an unabashed defender of wealth and privilege. In a *New York Daily News* opinion piece in June 2016 (“How Hillary Clinton earns men’s scorn: Women aren’t supposed to be brazen in pursuit of wealth”), for example, Grenell took Senator Bernie Sanders to task for repeatedly challenging “Hillary Clinton to release her Goldman Sachs transcripts, stirring intrigue about three speeches for which she earned a total of \$675,000. Although Sanders’ point is that Clinton is too compromised to fairly regulate Wall Street, his unstated accusation is that she’s also rich and greedy.”

Grenell continued: “It’s an argument that cuts straight to the bleeding heart of left-wing politics, with an added, and perhaps unintended, twist: ‘Women, let alone liberals, are not supposed to pursue or feel entitled to money.’ ... Sanders’ attack derives first and foremost from a liberal skepticism of wealth and those who accumulate it. The theory goes that people who want to lead a government of, by and for the people should truly be of the people. Every dollar greedily earned distances a would-be leader from the real-life concerns of the working and middle classes.” Not much needs to be added to this.

The big choices confronting the most affluent layer of women consist of where to vacation and in what companies to invest their millions. They will never be forced to get a second job at Amazon to help provide basic necessities for their children or grandchildren. Their daughters and sons will not feel the pressure to put off starting a family for fear of not being able to provide for them. They will never worry about having access to healthcare or an abortion clinic. They will never experience the trauma of having children separated from them, held in concentration camps, as with so many immigrants to the US.

The Democratic Party was incapable of and hostile to mobilizing opposition to the confirmation of Kavanaugh, a hardened reactionary, on the basis of these social issues. Instead, the Democrats and their #MeToo supporters organized a campaign on a right-wing, antidemocratic basis, a theme that runs powerfully through Grenell’s article.

Describing her reaction to Kavanaugh’s confirmation, Grenell complains, “Meanwhile, [Maine Republican] Senator [Susan] Collins subjected us to a slow funeral dirge *about due process and some other nonsense I couldn’t even hear through my rage headache* as she announced on Friday she would vote to confirm Judge Kavanaugh” (emphasis added).

The WSWS has previously written on how the politics of petit-bourgeois “rage” has been used as part of a turn to the

irrational, and a turn away from elementary democratic rights such as due process.

Early on in her piece, Grenell comments that the women she is speaking of are those “white women” who think that “being falsely accused of rape is almost as bad as being raped. The kind of women who agree with President Trump that ‘it’s a very scary time for young men in America.’”

Grenell’s contempt for women who might be concerned about the implications of the destruction of due process for their sons, husbands, brothers and men in general is deeply repugnant. Indifference to such questions merely assists the ultra-right, which is able to falsely posture as protectors of democracy because of the rottenness of the Democrats and the identity politics zealots.

The #MeToo movement is cultivating a climate in which a man has reason to fear traveling in an elevator alone with a woman because it could mean accusations and disgrace, or worse; in which a man might need to think twice before accompanying a woman to her car late at night or sitting too close on a train for fear of being accused of making an “unwanted advance.”

Far from “fixing sexual relations” in the US, the #MeToo movement is out to destroy any progress that has been made over the last 100 years and further muddle one of the most complex relationships among humans.

However, the relationship of the working class and the mass of the population to democratic rights is very different. Grenell’s “rage” is in large part due to the fact that, much to her dismay, democratic sensibilities run deep in the American working class and public opinion is generally hostile to the attacks on the presumption of innocence and other basic protections.

These sensibilities have not been so easily swayed by the frenzied lynch mob mentality of the petty bourgeoisie seeking to secure and advance their own privileged positions within capitalism.



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